



Division of Child Protection & Permanency Summary Guidelines

Updated 5/19/20

In response to COVID-19 precautions and planning, the Department of Children and Families' leadership has prepared a contingency plan for Division of Child Protection and Permanency (CP&P) operations – one that ensures the safety of staff and the provision of critical services to New Jersey residents. This plan will continue in effect for the duration of the current public health emergency declared by Governor Murphy in Executive Order 103 and will be monitored and modified as needed in response to changing conditions. **Staff should consult official updated guidelines issued 5/19/20 for further details.**

QUICK SUMMARY

Most CP&P staff will perform their work functions remotely. Each Area office will have a COVID-19 Response Team and a skeleton staff that will support administrative operations. Based on shifting operational needs, staff working via remote technology may be contacted to report to an office or to perform alternate duties.

STATE CENTRAL REGISTRY (SCR)

SCR staff will triage calls and prioritize those in need of immediate response based on three priority levels in order to send reports to the local screeners, 24/7. The designated screener will be responsible for monitoring and assigning reports to the COVID-19 Response Team.

COVID-19 RESPONSE TEAM FIELD ACTIVITY

Response teams were created for each of the nine Areas utilizing select, paid, volunteer CP&P field staff from local and area offices. These staff will respond to calls screened in by the State Central Registry (SCR) and are responsible for conducting investigations and home visits to open and high-risk families.

LOCAL/AREA OFFICE MEETING STRUCTURES

There is a prescribed meeting structure requiring weekly, remote meetings, check-ins, with managers, supervisors and staff. Please check the 5/19/20 CP&P Guidance for the rubric. CP&P

PERMANENCY/ADOLESCENT AND ADOPTION WORKERS

Permanency, Adolescent and Adoption Workers will be stationed remotely and are required to document casework activities in NJSPIRIT or to maintain a detailed notebook of contacts until NJSPIRIT access is feasible. Each is expected to contact their families and youth via remote technology a minimum of once a week and at least two video contacts per month, per family. Very high-risk, high-risk and families with a child age 3 or younger, families with a history of DV and cases with active safety protection plans will follow more stringent protocols. Workers also must be available by remote technology to participate in court hearings and submitting court reports, as necessary. More details are included in the 5/19/20 Official CP&P Guidance document.

CASEWORKERS

Caseworkers are responsible for scheduling collaboration meetings with providers serving CP&P families through remote technology, assisting with remote visitation, ensuring distance learning is proceeding and that all other work activities are carried out online/virtually. Staff are required to document all activities in NJSPIRIT.

SUPERVISORS/CASEWORK SUPERVISORS

Supervisors and Casework Supervisors must schedule weekly conference calls with their staff and weekly group conference calls with their unit. They also must actively conference all families that have Safety Protection Plans and be available by phone/skype to participate in court hearings. Each is required to review court reports prior to submission. With access to NJ Spirit, Supervisors and Casework Supervisors are required to perform all existing functions of their positions.

RESOURCE CARE STAFF

Local Office Resource Staff are expected to make frequent and regular calls to all resource parents with children placed in their homes to assess need and to determine the well-being of the child/ren in placement. In addition, they will facilitate foster, kinship and respite placements. Timelines and requirements for various activities, plans, statements and waivers may be adjusted (check 5/19/20 Official CP&P guidance document). All contact must be documented in NJ SPIRIT.

ASSISTANT FAMILY SERVICES WORKER

Each Local office will designate two AFSWs to assist in the delivery of emergent supplies to children and families, for which they will each be assigned a vehicle. Others will receive

assignments from their direct supervisors to support the needs of families or staff in their units.

YOUTH

Young adults that are nearing their 21st birthday will have their cases extended until December 31, 2020, allowing them to access any needed case services, unless otherwise declined, in writing.

PARALEGALS

Paralegals are expected to draft complaints and coordinate emergent court related matters with the DAGs and litigation supervisor.

COURT/LITIGATION

All intake, permanency and adoption staff are expected to be available via remote technology to participate in court hearings and to submit court papers, as necessary. The courts, while closed to the public, are still operating using remote technology. A table of information related to court appearance requirements is in the 5/19/20 CP&P Guidance document.

COMMUNICATING WITH FAMILIES

Ongoing communication with children, adolescents, youth adults and families is imperative during this contingency period. [Visitation](#) is essential to maintaining parent-child connections and enhancing caregiver protective capacities. Additional information about available technology and connectivity is attached to the 5/19/20 CP&P Guidance document.

SAFETY IN THE FIELD

Staff safety is a priority for DCF. There are eight Safety Advisors available to facilitate virtual safety workshops for staff, consult with local law enforcement, triage issues for CP&P staff and to participate in staff meetings. DCF also deployed a statewide Safe Signal application that allows staff to immediately notify the need for law enforcement assistance. To support staff wellness, workers may access Worker2Worker at 1-855-327-7482, the Crisis Textline – text NJ to 741741 and the DCF [Staff Mindfulness page](#).